

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Saudi Arabia

Post: Riyadh

CSSF Activity Evaluation Report

Report Categories:

CSSF Activity Report

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CSSF Activity: GCC Regional Workshop on Food Additives
CSSF Used: \$1,618.86
Date: September 15-17, 2012
City/Country: Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Purpose of the activity:

OAA Riyadh Ag Marketing Specialist accompanied two senior food standard expert from the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) to the USDA sponsored workshop on “Food Additives: A Global Perspective on Safety Evaluation and Use”. The objective of the workshop, which was held in Dubai, was to harmonize regulations in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries concerning food ingredients, especially coloring materials, and prevent possible move by these countries to ban imports of high value food products. This issue has been the subject of discussion by the regulatory agencies in the GCC and other countries for the past two years. The U.S. guidance on formulating their policy is essential to maintain unfettered access for U.S. exports of consumer-ready products to the GCC markets.

Actual Results:

The workshop provided an excellent opportunity for 50 participants from the GCC countries, Jordan, Egypt who deal with government regulations and standard for food processing to learn about the procedures that Codex Alimentarius and the United States follow when establishing safety and regulations for food additives. Several U.S. industry food additives experts shared their knowledge and expertise with the participants of the conference. The U.S. experts discussed major food additives issues of interest for the participants including:

- Safety and suitability of food additives
- GSFA-Regulation of Food Additives within Codex; Footnote 161
- Safety and Benefits of Food Colors
- Color Additive: Recent Issues on Hyperactivity and Exposure
- Alternative Sweeteners: Implications for Weight Management and Obesity
- Stevia: An Emerging Sweetener
- Economic and Regulatory Impact of Food Additive Changes
- Introduction to the International Food Additives Database

Feedback provided by Saudi and GCC participants during the seminar indicated that the workshop was helpful in increasing their awareness of the safety aspects of food ingredients used by the U.S. food processing industry. Also, the GCC officials indicated that they would thoroughly study the information provided during the workshop when revising their food additives’ regulations and standards.

The OAA/Riyadh's assessment is that the workshop was successful in convincing the participants from the GCC countries to pledge that any future revisions to their current food additives standards and regulations will be based on science. FAS/W should continue to work with OAA Riyadh and Dubai to identify similar regional capacity building activities in the GCC region to prevent issuing arbitrary food standards that may negatively impact exports of U.S. food products to the region in the future. Implementing such outreach activities in the GCC countries will be cost effective and will save the time and efforts to send the regulatory officials to the U.S. for consultation or training.